



Debbie Kievits, TVCCA Board Second Vice-Chairman

testimony in support of

H.B. No. 5284 (RAISED) ACT INCREASING FUNDING FOR ELDERLY NUTRITION

Aging Committee- February 25, 2016

Senator Flexer, Representative Serra and members of the Aging Committee, my name is Debbie Kievits and I am the Second Vice-Chairman of the TVCCA Board of Trustees. I am offering testimony in **strong support of House Bill 5284- An Act Increasing Funding for Elderly Nutrition.**

Thames Valley Council for Community Action, Inc, (TVCCA) has been operating the Elderly Nutrition program for over 40 years in New London County and for 28 years in Windham County. Last program year, through the Meals on Wheels component, we provided 3,460 homebound elderly citizens with nutritious meals and wellness checks.

I am writing to urge your support for an increase in the meal reimbursement under the Connecticut Home Care Program for Elders (CHCPE). In the past nine years, the reimbursement rate has seen only a 1% or 4 cents per meal increase. This has not kept up with rising costs to produce and deliver the meals to homebound seniors in the Home Care Program. It is costing TVCCA close to \$6.00 to buy the food, make and then deliver the meal. Since the Home Care clients do not have a co-pay for us, for every meal we deliver we are losing money.

Throughout New London and Windham Counties, TVCCA staff and volunteers drive roughly 1,300 miles each day to deliver meals. We are not reimbursed for mileage or other related delivery costs, though in some of the rural areas we serve, it can take up to 90 minutes to deliver to just 5 homes.

Even with the 1% increase in 2014, our program and every other CT Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Providers (CANASP) program loses money on every meal it serves in the CT Home Care Program. We lose an average of \$1.44 per meal delivered – in 2015 this equated to a loss of \$76,242. Operating a program in the red is not sustainable.

To continue serving our elderly, we need a rate increase that will provide full reimbursement for every meal.

TVCCA continuously works with our community partners for grant opportunities and fundraising events, but fundraising is not enough to offset our costs in the Home Care Program.

The Meals on Wheels program is more than a meal. This simple and very inexpensive service can prevent or delay more costly services such as hospitalizations and nursing home care. It is a daily check-up on a home bound senior. It is a life line for many.

Without a rate increase, TVCCA may not be able to continue to provide this vital service and in the end, it will be our seniors who will suffer. If funding is not increased, TVCCA may be forced to limit service to fewer days per week, serve less people, or cease participation in the CT Homecare Program entirely.

We urge you to consider increasing reimbursement rates under the CT Home Care Program for Elders.

Thank you for your time and consideration to this matter.